

JAZZ REVIEW

From the Home of Hitsville, U.S.A., Give It Up for . . . Jazz!

By NATE CHINEN

Detroit has always been an underdog among America's jazz cities, but it has turned out more than its share of major jazz musicians. Their legacy, irreducible to a single sound or style, was the impetus for Motor City Jazz, a concert presented Thursday through Saturday at Frederick P. Rose Hall.

Friday night's show was split in two: a Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra performance and a looser all-star combo set. The music throughout was by Detroit natives, including the guest bassist Ron Carter, the only performer to play on every piece of the concert. (Ali Jackson, a Detroit native and the Lincoln Center orchestra's regular drummer, played on all but one.)

Wynton Marsalis was a constant, too, though not in the usual sense: he used his trumpet sparingly in the first half and not at all in the second, but was M.C. all night, introducing each composition with an engaging bit of back story. Early on, he succinctly enumerated the cultural exports of Detroit: automobiles, Motown and jazz.

Motown had no place on the program, for better or worse. Automob-

The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra plays in East Lansing, Mich., on Jan. 25 and in Detroit on Jan. 27.



Hiroiyuki Ito for The New York Times

Yusef Lateef, far left, joined others in playing his "Morning Trilogy."

biles, on the other hand, offered an easy analogy, at least in the first half: like most good big bands, the Lincoln Center orchestra can suggest a finely tuned machine. This was especially true on brisk and complicated arrangements like Thad Jones's "Counter Block." With the saxophones darting around in tight harmony and the trumpets blurting syncopated interjections, it wasn't hard to picture the pumping of pistons in a combustion engine.

By contrast, "Morning Trilogy," a short suite composed for the orches-

tra by the multi-reedist Yusef Lateef, suggested the stirrings of a warmblooded organism. The first movement opened with a low drone, bowed by Mr. Carter, and a series of incantations on wood flutes, evocatively played by Mr. Lateef. A gentle percussive undercurrent set the stage for solos by Vincent Gardner on trombone and Mr. Lateef on tenor saxophone. Mr. Lateef struck a tone that was gruff but not the least bit declamatory, his phrasing echoing the inflections of human speech.

"Morning Trilogy" went on to drift

Motor City Jazz

Frederick P. Rose Hall

through waltz time and then a hazy slow section, ending on a pillowy yet disquieting final chord; it was a nice stretch for the orchestra, and an overall success. But it was also ephemeral. To close the half, the orchestra snapped back to form for "Minor Situation," a bebop-tinged number by Barry Harris.

Mr. Lateef, Mr. Carter and Mr. Jackson returned for the second half and were joined by the trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, the alto saxophonist Charles McPherson, the trombonists Curtis Fuller and Wycliffe Gordon, the pianist Geri Allen, and the percussionist Roger Squitiero. The ensemble played three pieces by Mr. Carter, including "Sheila's Song," a haunting flamenco lament. But it was on a tune by Mr. Belgrave, the sprightly and soulful "All My Love," that the group came alive.

The relative maturity of the musicians — only Mr. Jackson is under 30 — could be misconstrued as a sign that the Detroit jazz scene, which peaked in the 1950's, has moldered right along with the city's automotive industry. Any such thought was swept aside by Mr. Fuller's closer, "À la Mode," which stirred up one last mental image: sun shining, top down and an open road ahead.